

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15
USIA-06 SSM-03 TRSE-00 IO-13 ACDA-07 /079 W
-----090439Z 122246 /14

R 081143Z APR 77
FM AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5621
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN
WMEMBASSY CAIRO 6638
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
AMCONSUL JERUSALEM

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PFOR, PINT, IS
SUBJECT: CONVERSATION WITH EZER WEIZMAN

1. CHARGE' AND POLITICAL OFFICER MET WITH EZER WEIZMAN
AT HERUT PARTY HEADQUARTERS APRIL 6. WEIZMAN IS
MANAGING THE LIKUD'S ELECTION CAMPAIGN AND, WITH LIKUD
LEADER MENAHEM BEGIN STILL IN THE HOSPITAL, IS VERY
MUCH IN CHARGE OF THINGS.

2. WEIZMAN INITIALLY SPOKE CONFIDENTLY OF A LIKUD
VICTORY MAY 17, BUT LATER IN THE CONVERSATION WAS
SOMEWHAT EQUIVOCAL, INDICATING THAT A FEW SEATS
EITHER WAY WOULD DECIDE THE OUTCOME BETWEEN THE
ALIGNMENT AND THE LIKUD. ACCORDING TO HIS ARITHMETIC
THE DMC WILL OBTAIN 8-10 SEATS, THE RELIGIOUS PARTIES
14, RAKAH 6-8, WITH PERHAPS 3 OR 4 SEATS FOR THE
OTHER PARTIES, WHICH WILL LEAVE THE LIKUD AND
THE ALIGNMENT TO SPLIT SOME 85 SEATS.

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3. ALTHOUGH WEIZMAN DID NOT BELIEVE THE DMC
WOULD OBTAIN MORE THAN 10 SEATS AT MOST, HE
WISHED THE PARTY WELL, BECAUSE IT WAS UNWITTINGLY
DOING THE LIKUD'S WORK BY CUTTING INTO THE ALIGN-
MENT.

4. HE ADMITTED THAT THIS MIGHT BE A "MAKE OR BREAK"

ELECTION FOR THE LIKUD BUT ONLY TO A SLIGHTLY LESSER EXTENT FOR THE ALIGNMENT AS WELL. RABIN WOULD NOT BE ABLE TO SURVIVE LABOR'S FIRST DEFEAT SINCE STATEHOOD. AT ONE POINT IN HIS HIGHLY ANIMATED DISCOURSE WEIZMAN DISMISSED RABIN AS A "DEAD DUCK" (A PROPHETIC REMARK IN VIEW OF RABIN'S RESIGNATION FROM LABOR PARTY LEADERSHIP THE NEXT DAY).

5. WEIZMAN CONFIRMED THAT TALKS WERE CONTINUING BETWEEN HIS PARTY AND ARIK SHARON--A STORY APPEARING IN THE PRESS IN RECENT DAYS. (ONE REPORT STATES THAT SHARON IS INSISTING ON SIX CONSECUTIVE PLACES ON THE LIKUD KNESSET LIST BEGINNING WITH NUMBER 40. THIS WOULD TYPIFY SHARON'S BRAVADO SINCE, WITH SUCH A DEMAND, SHARON IS SAYING THAT HE CAN GUARANTEE THE LIKUD WILL OBTAIN MORE THAN 40 SEATS). THE NEGOTIATIONS ARE DIFFICULT AND ABSORBING HIM INTO THE LIKUD'S KNESSET LIST WOULD CAUSE PROBLEMS, BUT WEIZMAN CONSIDERED SHARON TO BE AN ASSET. "SHARON'S A SONOVABITCH, BUT HE'S ONE OF US. WE KNOW HIM WELL." WEIZMAN HINTED THAT THE TALKS WOULD BE SUCCESSFUL AND THAT THERE WOULD BE AN ANNOUNCEMENT "WITHIN 48 HOURS." AT THIS POINT HE NOTED, WITHOUT DRAWING ANY CONCLUSIONS, THAT MANY OF THE LEADING LIGHTS OF THE CURRENT ELECTION CAMPAIGN WERE FORMER TOP-RANKING GENERALS. IN ADDITION TO HIMSELF AND SHARON, HE POINTED TO FORMER CHIEFS-OF-STAFF RABIN, BAR-LEV AND YADIN.

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6. ACCORDING TO WEIZMAN, BEGIN'S ILLNESS HAS FORCED A RADICAL CHANGE IN THE CAMPAIGN STRATEGY WEIZMAN HAD DEVELOPED. WITHOUT ELABORATING, HE INDICATED THAT THE PARTY WILL HAVE TO DISCARD EARLIER PLANS TO REVAMP BEGIN'S IMAGE. WEIZMAN SPOKE OF HIS OWN FRENZIED ACTIVITY ON BEHALF OF THE CAMPAIGN, ASSERTING THAT HE SPEAKS EVERY NIGHT IN A DIFFERENT TOWN. HIS BASIC MESSAGE IS "IF YOU WANT CHANGE, ONLY THE LIKUD CAN GIVE IT TO YOU." HE MAINTAINED THAT HE IS FINDING A READY RESPONSE TO THIS SLOGAN AMONG HIS AUDIENCES.

7. WEIZMAN PROFESSED TO SEE NO DIFFERENCE IN THE VIEWS OF THE FOUR MAJOR PARTIES (ALIGNMENT, LIKUD, NRP, DMC) REGARDING THE WEST BANK. HE MAINTAINED THAT ALL FOUR INSIST THAT THE JORDAN MUST BE THE "DEFENSIBLE BORDER" AND THAT WHEN THE ALIGNMENT, FOR EXAMPLE, OFFERS THE ALLON PLAN OR TERRITORIAL COMPROMISE ON THE WEST BANK, THEY ARE BEING DIS-

HONEST. THERE IS NOTHING SACRED ABOUT THE PRE-1967 LINES; THEY ONLY MARK THE POINTS AT WHICH THE ARMIES CEASED FIRING IN THE 1948 WAR.

8. WEIZMAN SHARPLY CRITICIZED RABIN FOR BASING ISRAEL'S CLAIM TO CERTAIN AREAS BEYOND THE GREEN LINE ON THE NEEDS OF SECURITY ALONE. FOR HIS PART, WEIZMAN MAINTAINED THAT "THE ESSENCE" OF ISRAEL LAY IN SUCH AREAS AS JERUSALEM AND HEBRON AND THAT THESE AREAS WERE CERTAINLY NOT LESS VITAL TO ISRAEL IN A MORAL SENSE THAN GALILEE. WAS GALILEE MORE ISRAELI BY TRADITION THAN JUDEA OR SAMARIA?

9. COMMENT: WEIZMAN, ALTHOUGH NOT DESIGNATED AS BEGIN'S HEIR-APPARENT, PROBABLY IS THE NUMBER TWO MAN IN THE LIKUD. HIS SPEECH IS LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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EARTHY AND REplete WITH SALTY EXPRESSIONS. HE COMES ACROSS AS A MAN OF COLOR AND VIGOR IN AN OTHERWISE GRAY PARTY (ASIDE FROM BEGIN). HIS FAILURE TO SEE A DIFFERENCE BETWEEN HIS PARTY AND THE ALIGNMENT ON THE WEST BANK ISSUE WAS PATENTLY DISINGENUOUS, BUT HIS OWN HARD LINE ON TERRITORIAL RETROCESSION THERE IS CRYSTAL CLEAR. DUNNIGAN

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